

P. Blanc, Suzanne
CIA 104 Marchetti,
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Dancer

New spy novel gives inside view of CIA

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VICTOR MARCHETTI'S superb spy novel, *The Rope Dancer* (Grosset & Dunlap, \$6.95) may not topple the CIA but it will certainly shake the intelligence network.

Marchetti, who was with the CIA for fourteen years, knows the organization very well. In 1969, at a position roughly equivalent to that of a full colonel, he resigned, convinced that the agency had become so rich, so bureaucratic and so impervious to change that it no longer served the national interest.

Though his book is a piece of fiction rather than an expose, it is remarkable for its realism, and behind the disguise of the fictional agency constructed for a setting, the shape of the CIA is clearly visible.

Rising close to the top in this fictional agency, the protagonist, Paul Franklin, is aware of the bureaucratic bungling around him. Incidents like the Bay of Pigs fiasco have disillusioned him. The advice his agency gives the President seems consistently slanted and he sees in it an ineptness and self-oriented interest that extends to the entire intelligence community.

Instead of resigning he decides to spy for the Russians. Once he has approached them he is caught in a dangerous game that he is forced to play out to the end. Each step of his path has an unmistakable ring of authenticity, his methods of approaching the Soviets, the ease with which he duplicates sensitive documents, his meetings with contacts, his secret trips in and out of

the country.

The details are fascinating. The similarity between our espionage apparatus and that of the Russians emerges, and the parts seem interchangeable. The same regulations govern the relationship between the spy and his "case officer." There are the same hatchet men, the same chain of command, the same bureaucrats. Through it all Paul moves on his dangerous tightrope, living his multiple lives. He is himself a compelling character, driven by contradictions and trapped in a system he wants to destroy.

It's a gripping book. Everyone should read it — especially those who have always considered spy fiction trivial.